

Horse Bites Fence



Horse Bites Fence

2019

Rebecca Bligh

Uma Breakdown

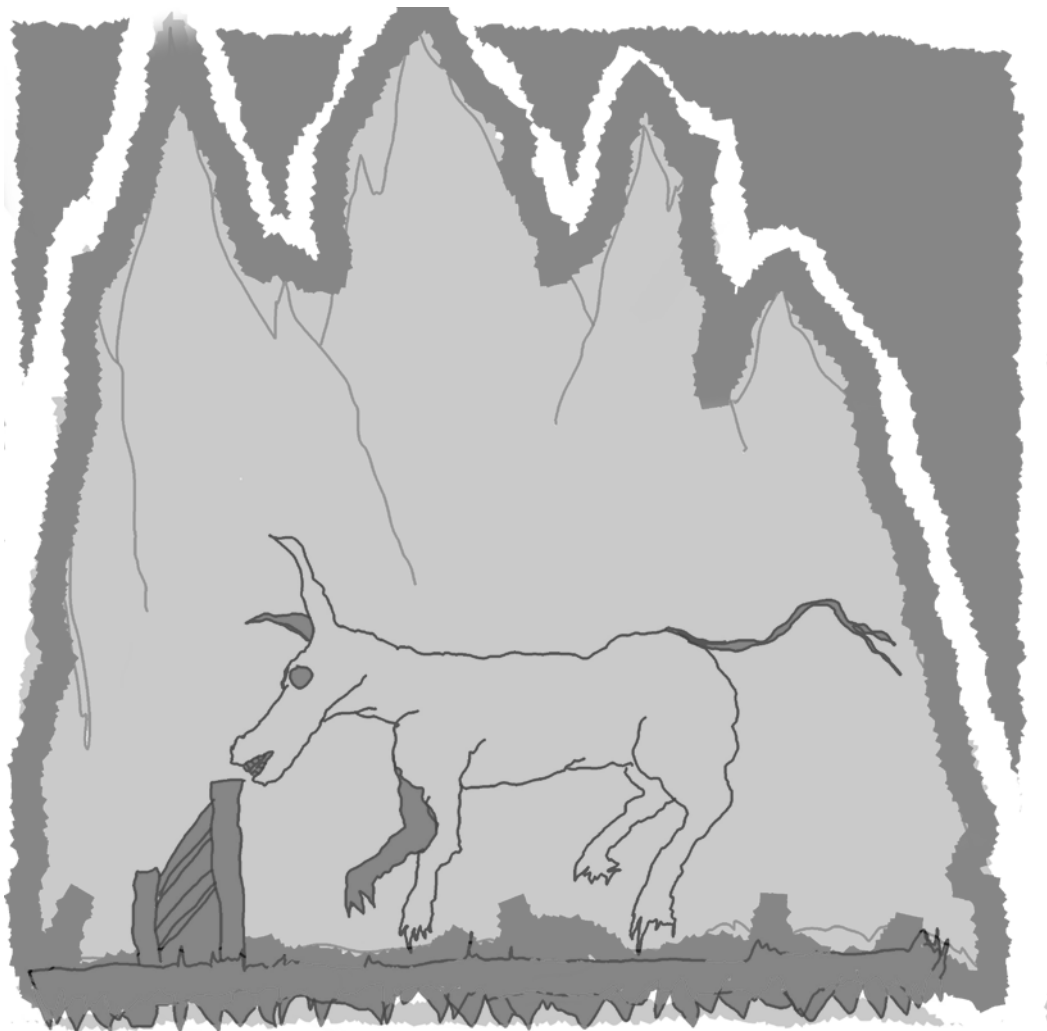
Elena Colman



RB: hey, i think i just self-diagnosed with ADHD, am i right in thinking that's something you know about? If so, would welcome any recs you might have for reading/resources (it would explain so muchhhh)

RB: (also wondering about the rel between ADHD and trauma)

HP: Oooh yes! ADHD is definitely the errr paradigm I am working with right now if that's a way to think about it. I am actually amazed by how practically useful it has been to think in these terms. [tho] in terms of research/resources stuff is thin on the ground and



mixed up with a lot of neurocognitive research which i find quite dodgy in places. Not to mention the (very american) pharmaceutical agenda. The best stuff i found has been self advocacy descriptive personal account stuff and that has been very much a process of reading between the lines. Basically people with ADHD tend to at least appear quite 'high functioning' (not an ideal phrase because hierarchies) so go undetected often, and then its very very stigmatised in that often symptoms or traits are judged in moral terms. But most important sort of secondary ideas i have found are about Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria and anxiety as a hugely comorbid secondary issue which is more likely to be treated than the adhd itself. The relationship to discipline and goal setting is formative as is chronophobia or a traumatised relation to time and sometimes memory ...The neurocognitive hypothesis is that its a problem in the dopamine cycle so process is more fulfilling than completion of work but i am super skeptical about neurotransmitter theories .

HP: As far as its relation to trauma goes i would say it probably renders us more vulnerable to cptsd. lack of diagnosis or 'management' of adhd leads to problematic coping mechanisms leading possibly to abusive or addictive behaviours or on the other end vulnerability from a lack of or funky interpersonal boundaries. But whether anything is causal/symptomatic or comorbid seems always particularly hard to tell with adhd, partly because of the non typical relation to time ...i think most important that mental health problems are treated in the context of adhd as a constitution rather



than as isolated and i think that would go for trauma stuff too. Apparently ADHD folks have less success with ssris than others ... I think a body focused/somatic approach v v productive for both adhd and trauma. Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria seems to me key. It's the idea that the emotional impact of rejection is almost irrationally high in many adhd folks but this may be a traumatised relation from the stigma of adhd and literally being reprimanded more often than neurotypical folks rather than being an essential difference so if there's an interaction with trauma specific to adhd it might be related to emotional response to external stimuli being higher.

RB: gosh, yea

·  
HP: Sorry so much

·  
RB: wondering how receptive my gp would be to my requesting an adult diagnosis

·  
HP: My GP was like yes will refer u immediately, but thats with a recommendation from an Ed Psych which uni paid for (UPDATE: nhs aren't doing this as quickly as i thought and university seems to just be sending me through as many hoops as possible, lots of assessments, minimal support systems)

·  
RB: i saw this on Twitter – “ADHD Explained Using Comics”, by Dani Donovan  
and like– so much of it is me, so much

·  
RB: idk what chronophobia is but def have weird relationship with time – very wierd

·  
HP: I have sort of made up chronophobia but am sure its a thing

·  
RB: i feel lost in time. I def have ‘comorbidities’

·  
HP: It seems to me the best stuff around is DIY stuff exactly like the comics u link to

·  
RB: also – trouble starting anything – trouble finishing without hard

external deadlines – so me – why i never write, even tho i want/need to be writing

HP: I think these are like the defining traits tbh

.HP: Comorbidity is the creepiest word

.RB: RB: + procrastinating – as described ^^

.HP: Same!

.RB: do u medicate for it ? seems like mindfulness / meditation cld really be helpful

.HP: In America they see it as essential to medicate from a v early age but i am like v v v skeptical. For ADHD its Ritalin or Vyvanse so treatment with low constant dose of stimulants.

.RB: ok; so, like coffee? (just having my risky 2nd cup)

.HP: I dont myself want this prescription.

.yea; more interested in strategy

.HP: Am sure mindfulness etc v good but i do think body focused methods best. I read Erynn Brook's (sp?) twitter and she advocates meds but also talks a lot about building in good coping mechanisms



like how you organise yrsrlf in space/time in ways that work for u. So yeah strategy v key

·  
RB: hey thanks so much, couldn't have hoped for a more helpful reply – also in as much as i may unconsciously have posited u as gatekeeper

·  
HP: No worries! It's good talking to other people about it cos the grand narrative of it is well shaky. One thing i have worked out is that it's all just emerging now so u can't really gatekeep it thank fuck. Glad to be helpful always.



[time passes]

RB: hey, i'd really like to hear more about your thinking on chronophobia, it's stayed with me.

HP: Yes I would love to see you and talk about all this ... I have thoughts thoughts thought...

HP: Google searching 'Chronophobia' brings up this book from MIT about art in the 60s:

<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/chronophobia> It appears to be also a term in use in psychology/self help/ is in wiktionary and appears to mean the obvious, fear of the passing of time. Associations with incarcerated people particularly suffering from it and also anyone suffering from heightened stress and anxiety. When searching chronophobia and ADHD there are plenty of hits so again, this seems a connection well made. I'm also thinking about 'Chrononormativity' which is an idea i was first introduced to by my friend Helen Stuhr Rommerein and which I think she gets from Lauren Berlant in relation to 'queer time' or a failure to achieve normative milestones in the time allotted such as maturity, childbearing, marriage (see footnote).

Context in my work right now – all of this to do with ideas about speculation, past/present/future, chance/fate, resistance to goal/plan/target, not knowing what to do. I'm currently doing some early/cursory research into the mythology of the fates (Ancient Greek and



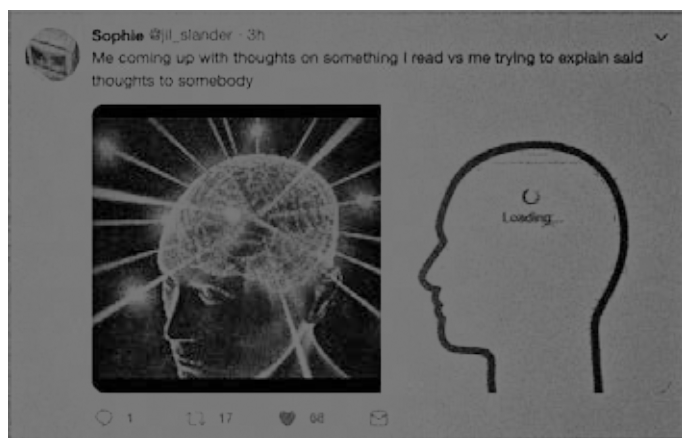
other cultures) as spinners, and thread as line, and ... trying to parse linearity and how it might or might not relate to neurodivergence/neurotypicality. I like lines as a way of following or tracing and also drawing as well as writing. I also think a lot about Ariadne's red thread in the labyrinth and now that i am trying to learn to spin, how all threads are made of many tiny ones. This trying to spin has grown out of an old durational performance work i have done for years. So durational performance as a form is part of this maybe for me. I always like the durational form as it is more about setting up boundaries in space and then letting time happen than [it is about] existing in linear time. chronophobia as anxiety about mortality and control or volition/agency or the trace of subjectivity in the world (cf

maybe tim ingold).

HP: Not sure i am doing this right but thought some context to the earlier conversation might be useful for orientation. At the same time as thinking about my own self diagnosis of ADHD and how it relates to knowledge and action and intention and access. I think this is a very good overview of neurodiversity discourse as it stands <https://www.janinebooth.com/content/two-and-half-cheers-neurodiversity>

RB: Thanks. You're doing this very right, I'd say. Like somewhere back in the transcript there is a 'gosh, yea' of mine which stands as a marker for the point at which my mind was blown, began to make new neural connections, bathed in a sort of speechless radiant awe for what you said ... and now ... galaxy brain in mandelbrot ... that this is what you're working on for your doctorate - I'm excited to know that this is what you're doing. I would really like to be present when you perform. I'm really impressed by your articulation. Also especially because - ehheh! I saw today that we both liked this tweet:

[Image description: A screenshot of a tweet by Sophie @Jil\_slender featuring two images side by side. On the left is an image of a human with their glowing brain radiating beams of light and stars. On right is a simple profile outline of a human head and inside it says "loading" with a circular web page loading icon. Above these images the caption reads "Me coming up with thoughts on something I read vs me trying to explain said thoughts to somebody"]





**Jeff VanderMeer** @jeffvandermeer · 7h

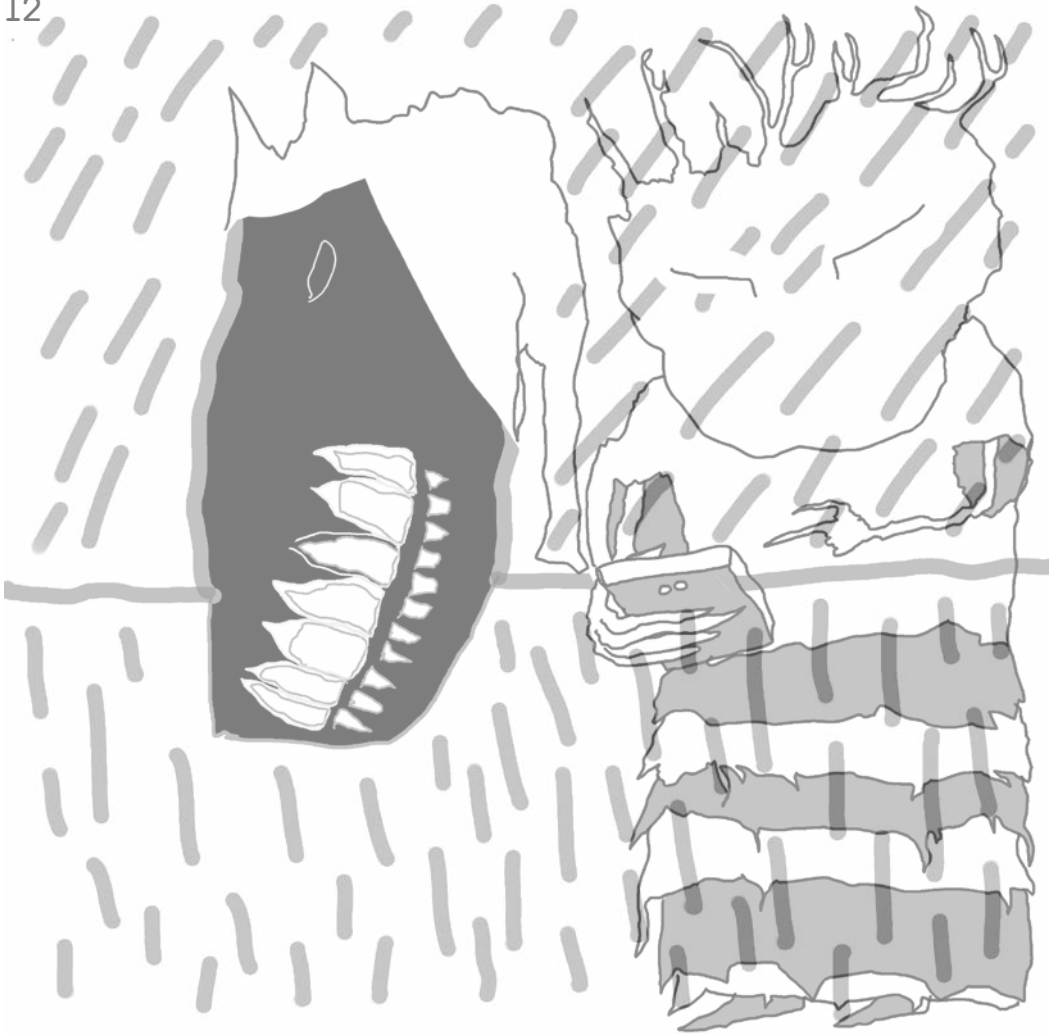
I tend to write in explosions--ideas, scene fragments, captured on notecards and notebooks longhand--and then spend 15 years writing all the novels/stories originating from the explosion. So I can seem prolific, but chances are I spent 5 to 10 yrs thinking about the latest novel.



RB: Another highlight, for me, of today's feed –

[Image description: A screenshot of a tweet by Jeff VanderMeer @Jeffvandermeer featuring a photograph of the seat of an office chair on which is a loose pile of notebooks and cards. Above the image the caption reads “I tend to write in explosions--ideas, scene fragments, captured on notecards and notebooks longhand--and then spend 15 years writing all the novels/stories originating from the explosion. So I can seem prolific, but chances are I spent 5 to 10 yrs thinking about the latest novel.”]

RB: I'm always keen for writers' writing on technique, scanning in case I find a key there to my own outward articulacy and/or the means to vanquish distraction/avoidance. Just remembered when the poet Lucy Mercer said to me that as a writer, I'm a weaver. I was happy with that then and I am here. I feel such a relieved shock of recognition for chronophobia as you describe it, as something I had



begun to acknowledge and articulate internally, but never outside myself, verbally or otherwise; nor had I any inkling that it might be tangled up with ADHD ... nor that it is something other people know about, nor that you are working on it in this profound way. I feel less alone and I am honoured that you shared this here with me/us.

HP: Hey! This is all so kind of you to say I am sort of overwhelmed. I made up chronophobia because i wanted a way to describe my fear of time. I dont think it was really to talk to anyone else about it. I guess i have really let you have it with the inner monologue. I looked it up after ... I mentioned it to you. I figured that this had, you know, happened before, that other people would already be using this

HP: I was going to email you and ask for a deadline today but in the end i didn't write any emails because i was just spinning yarn on the wheel. It's an amazing process learning to do it. Like a truly never-has-to-end embodied action. I think it could be the best way to replace some obsessive twitter scrolling. My dad totally gets it. He says singing while spinning that's the thing, he's heard. I learnt how to learn things from him mostly. I think maybe both my folks have ADHD. It's supposed to be super inheritable. My mum's a doctor. That's maybe where I get the cavalier attitude to discussing stuff like this you are supposed to be an expert to be allowed to think about. I am absolutely not an expert except perhaps of my own experience. Which this is, but but i push it i know that. [tho I don't want the meds] I absolutely want to stress i am not like totally against meds I am just in favour of people being given the best possible understanding of any treatment they undergo. I feel like i wanna unwind my own coping mechanisms like manually. Maybe that's a perk of late diagnosis - for me anyway.

HP: I have to stop now. I am in a park and it's dark now. I was sitting in the park cos i was an hour early to get a lift from my friend because i was so worried about being late. It's perfect timing though. If you like sitting in parks watching orange streetlamps through blossom as if they are the sunset like some kinda shook moth. Which I do. And then type super fast into a phone cos you know someone asked.

n  
HP: Thanks xx

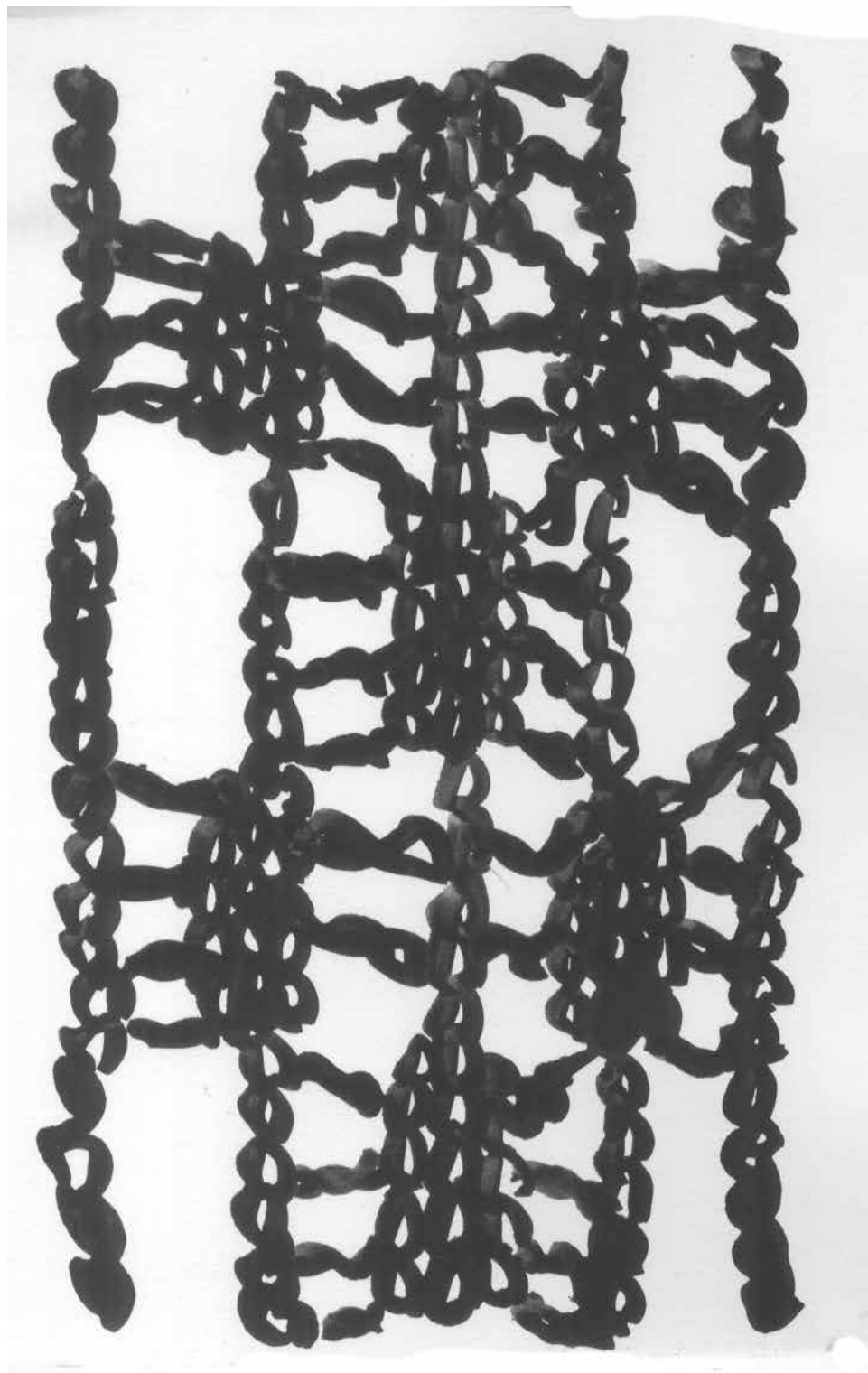
RB: <3

RB: Thank you

\*This is an abridged version of this conversation. Fuller version to read/ download here: [Horsebitesfence.tumblr.com](http://Horsebitesfence.tumblr.com)







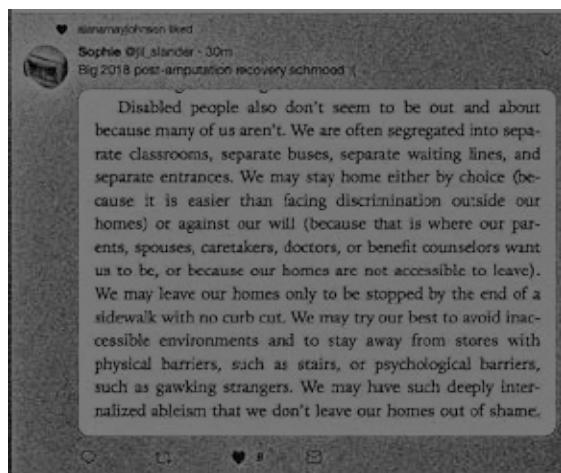
## One Year Sober – Sophie Helf interview

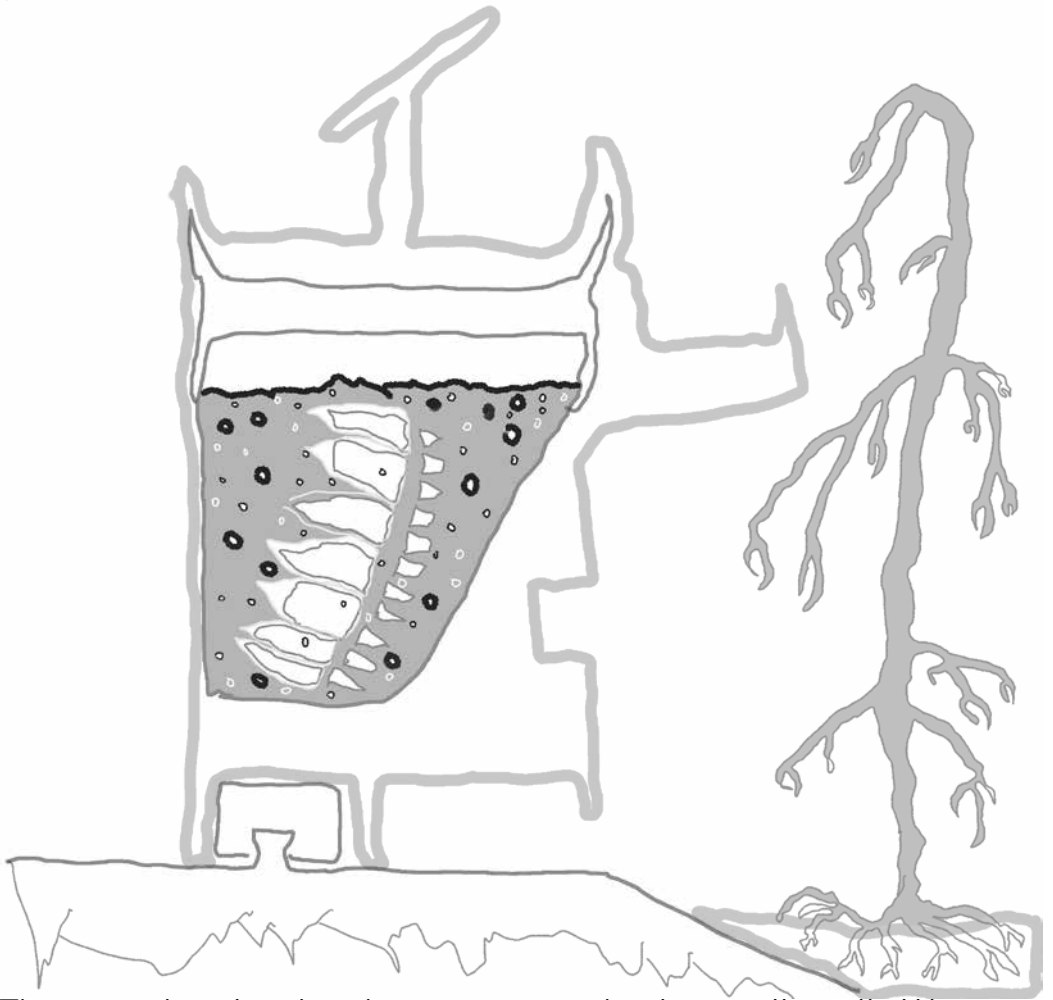
How is New York ? You spent a whole year working toward moving back there, and you made it! How's it been going so far?

– It's been wonderful. The past year was incredibly difficult – going through surgeries, relearning to walk – but I knew I wanted to move here so did whatever I could to heal up quickly. So far I'm quite happy here! It's nice to be able to see all my friends, go where I want, explore different opportunities. Simple things feel so good – having my own room, living with nice people, 'hustling' for work (ha!) Not a fan of the weather though.

We love your piece for the Outline: 'How I lost my legs and gained ... you want me to say something inspiring here' (link below), where you talk about inspo porn, being a little worm and how you love your legs. Also, you're getting new prosthetics – how do they compare, and might they lower the chance of another infection? That must have made the move that much harder (and more inspirational).

-- Thank you! My new prosthetics will actually be vacuum-powered – every time I take a step the ends of my legs sort of get 'sucked' into the prosthetic, so to speak. Everything is custom made, from the liners to the sockets, so it'll be a lot harder for my legs to chafe. The infection was miserable but has healed up pretty well so far. Sometimes the leg still hurts but not nearly as badly as it did before.



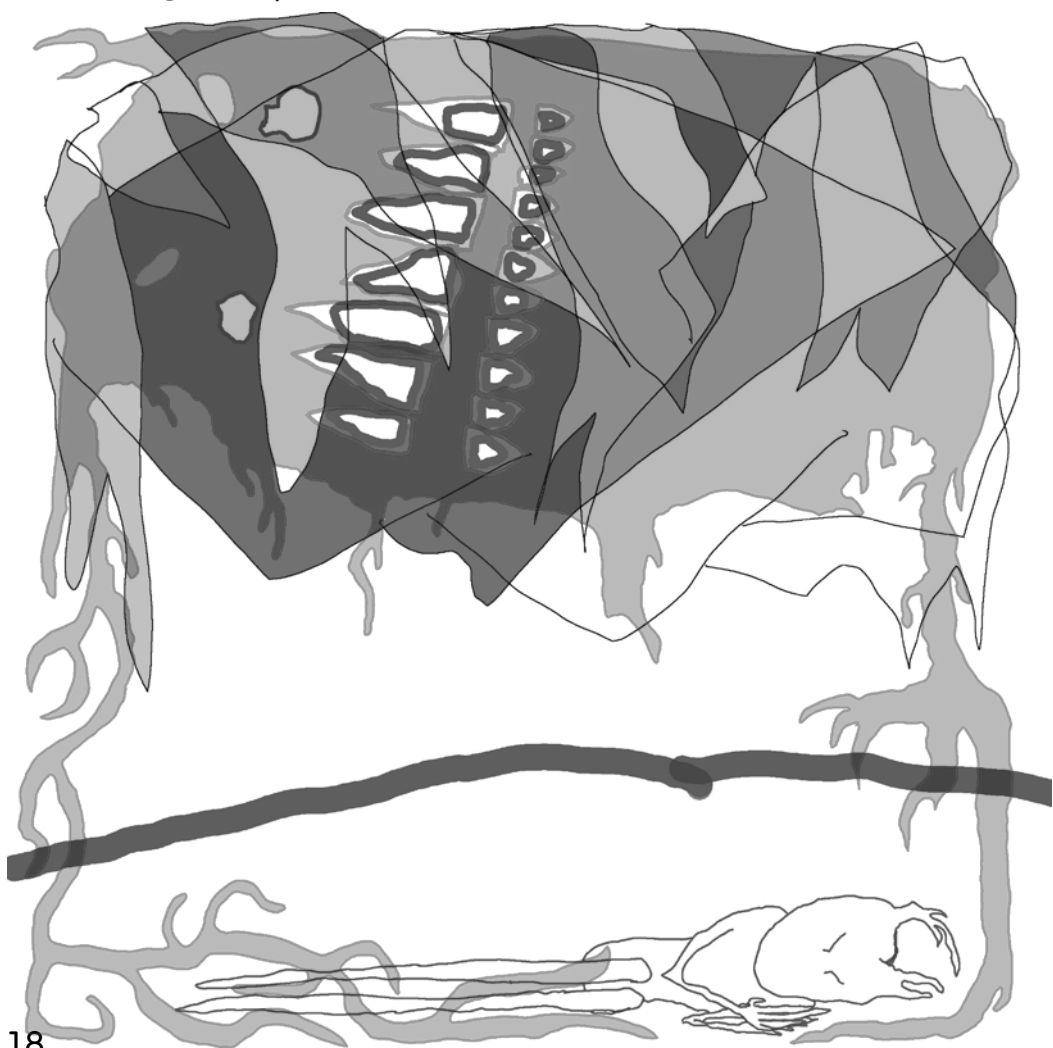


They sound cool and we hope it goes on healing really well. We saw you tweeted this:

[Image description: A screenshot of a tweet by Sophie @Jil\_slender featuring a cropped screenshot of some text which reads "Disabled people also don't seem to be out and about because many of us aren't. We are often segregated into separate classrooms, separate buses, separate waiting lines, and separate entrances. We may stay home either by choice )because it is easier than facing discrimination outside our homes) or against our will (because that is where our parents, spouses, caretakers, doctors, or benefit counselors want us to be, or because our homes are not accessible to leave). We may

leave our homes only to be stopped by the end of a sidewalk with no curb cut. We may try our best to avoid inaccessible environments and to stay away from stores with physical barriers, such as stairs, of psychological barriers such as gawking strangers. We may have such deeply internalized ableism that we don't leave our homes out of shame." above this image of text the caption reads "Big 2018 post-amputation recovery schmood :("]

You've also been tweeting about using the NY subway since you've been back there. From here it seems like it's pretty run down - kind of hostile for users in general and especially for disabled users. Has that been your experience?



-- The infrastructure can be pretty shit, depending on which station you're at. The one near my place is just a set of stairs leading underground that I have to carefully waddle down (though I'm getting better at that). Most people stick to the 'keep right' rule here, which is nice, but there have been occasions when I've had to dodge someone and almost fallen down. At the larger stations with various train lines there are elevators and escalators, but if you're at a smaller one it's probably just stairs. Good exercise, I suppose, but for people with mobility issues it's incredibly unfriendly.

Sort it out, NYC. You've lived in London, SF and New York; how do the three cities compare in terms of transport, access, attitudes?

-- The Bay Area actually has a fantastic subway system for disabled people. Every MUNI and BART station has an elevator and the trains can easily accommodate someone in a wheelchair. London stations were squeaky clean and most stations had elevators, even at the farther-out ones; I took it for granted at the time, but looking back it was very well put together. New York definitely has the most unfriendly transport system, but from what I've heard there have been rallies to make it more accessible, which I'm hoping leads to something better.

London's infrastructure is pretty good, but there are so many people. It's best to avoid rush hour if you can, but that's not always possible, and also pretty restrictive. London Transport now do a 'please offer



me a seat' badge, but we also need ones that say 'don't push', 'give me space', 'keep your distance'. Or maybe just 'keep the fuck away from me.' And more 'keep left' signs – it makes such a big difference.

-- London transport gets so incredibly crowded, more than in New York or San Francisco, I think – I definitely understand why you'd avoid rush hour ! I generally try not to go places in rush hour, and seeing as I've mostly been working from home, it's been easy. I'm hoping to get a 9-to-5 job, though, and am not sure how I'll deal with the crush. Stay posted for developments!

Yes! Best of luck! And best of health insurance. One of the many

things to love about your Twitter is the way you tweet on MH stuff, and meds, and coffee, and coffee on meds; you also tweet about sobriety. What's it been like being at NY parties sober?

-- I've definitely had my mental health issues in the past, which led me to getting sober. It's the best thing I've done for myself, I think; my mental health, though not perfect, is doing better without the guilt I used to get when I'd wake up after a messy night out. I don't really mind people drinking around me (or doing coke in some cases - oof) and people have been really respectful of my decision not to participate. I feel really lucky that hardly anyone's pressed me on why I got sober; if someone does, I just say 'I felt like it' and don't go into anything deeper because I don't really owe anyone an explanation.

Yes to respectfulness, and to not owing. And congratulations on a year sober.

You went to art school, but you studied design rather than fine art, so hopefully you're a bit less subject to the horrid vicissitudes of that world. How did you get into coding?

-- I was at Central St Martins from 2012 to 2015, a couple of years after they moved into that awful Granary Building. Very strange being there; they insisted that the great corridor in the centre was a space for collaborating, but you had to get express permission from tutors or higher-ups to put things there, and - I hated this -

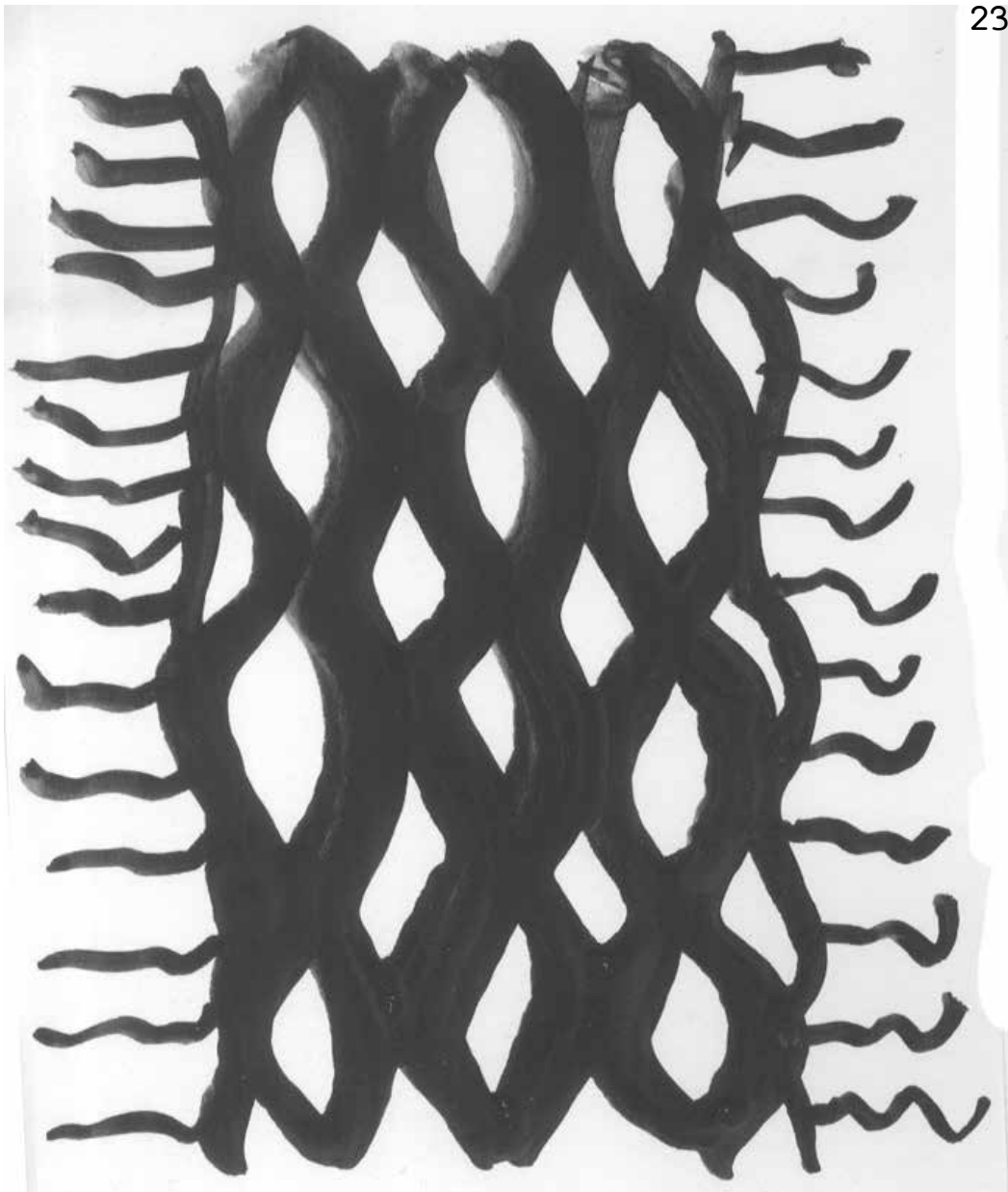
your tap-card could only get you into your studio. So if you were a design student and wanted to go into the fine art studios, you'd have to borrow a fine art student's card to get in. It really kept all the different programmes separate from each other and act discouraged collaboration in the end.

-- I got into coding after coming back to California from CSM without a Bay Area design/art network, without any idea how to get a job. Choosing to professionally pursue coding instead of design was a huge decision to make, but eventually I decided 'fuck it', applied to and attended a coding bootcamp. Now I do front-end website development. It's been interesting navigating the different splits and rivulets of 'the coding world', so to speak; there's 'the tech community', which I feel separate from as I tend to view coding as just something I do and not my entire lifestyle. Code can intersect with art and design in tons of different ways and I do like Twitter as a tool for keeping up with what the [art/design] people I admire are doing.

Can we be really prurient and ask what you meant when you tweeted about missing mid-2000s SF ?

-- I like this question! I guess that tweet was sort of mourning what San Francisco used to be like back before it was stuffed and crawling with tech people. I was in high school in the mid-2000's and specifically remember San Francisco as - scuzzier, I guess; still kind of eerie and loose and a little more dangerous. I was a little shit back then and spent a lot of time at a park called Dolores Park, which used to be crusty as hell and filled with naked hula-hooping people and boozy high schoolers passing around bad weed (including me and my friends). Now it's squeaky clean and gets stuffed with frat kids on the weekends. I'll admit that I do love to complain about current SF a





little too much. Cities do change, of course, but it makes me sad that SF is so incredibly unaffordable and losing much of the weird, wonky character it used to be known for. It does still constantly smell like weed and piss though, which is oddly comforting.

Is that what made you so keen to get out of there, aside from the glut of other coders, and the fact that it's your home town - or was it

more about getting to NY ?

-- Honestly I think you really hit the nail on the head re: tech people and hometown. It's a tiny city and I felt like I'd explored every corner, done everything I wanted to there, and got a little tired of bumping into parents of kids I went to high school with while I was buying a Diet Coke at the grocery store. And yes, I really wanted to go to New York – a lot of my friends live here, and it's a whole new city to get to know and explore. I've been here for a couple of months and feel like I've seen a tiny droplet of what's out there, which I like. And, truthfully, it's cheaper both transport-wise and rent-wise, which is important while I'm freelancing while looking for a job, and will continue to be nice once I'm salaried – more to save for retirement, health insurance and occasional fun things. I've wanted to live here since middle school so it's nice to, you know, be here. I like it a lot.

Sophie, thank you ! Enjoy New York.

Thank you for interviewing, this was very fun!

S

X

A longer version of this conversation can be found here:  
[Horsebitesfence.tumblr.com](http://Horsebitesfence.tumblr.com)

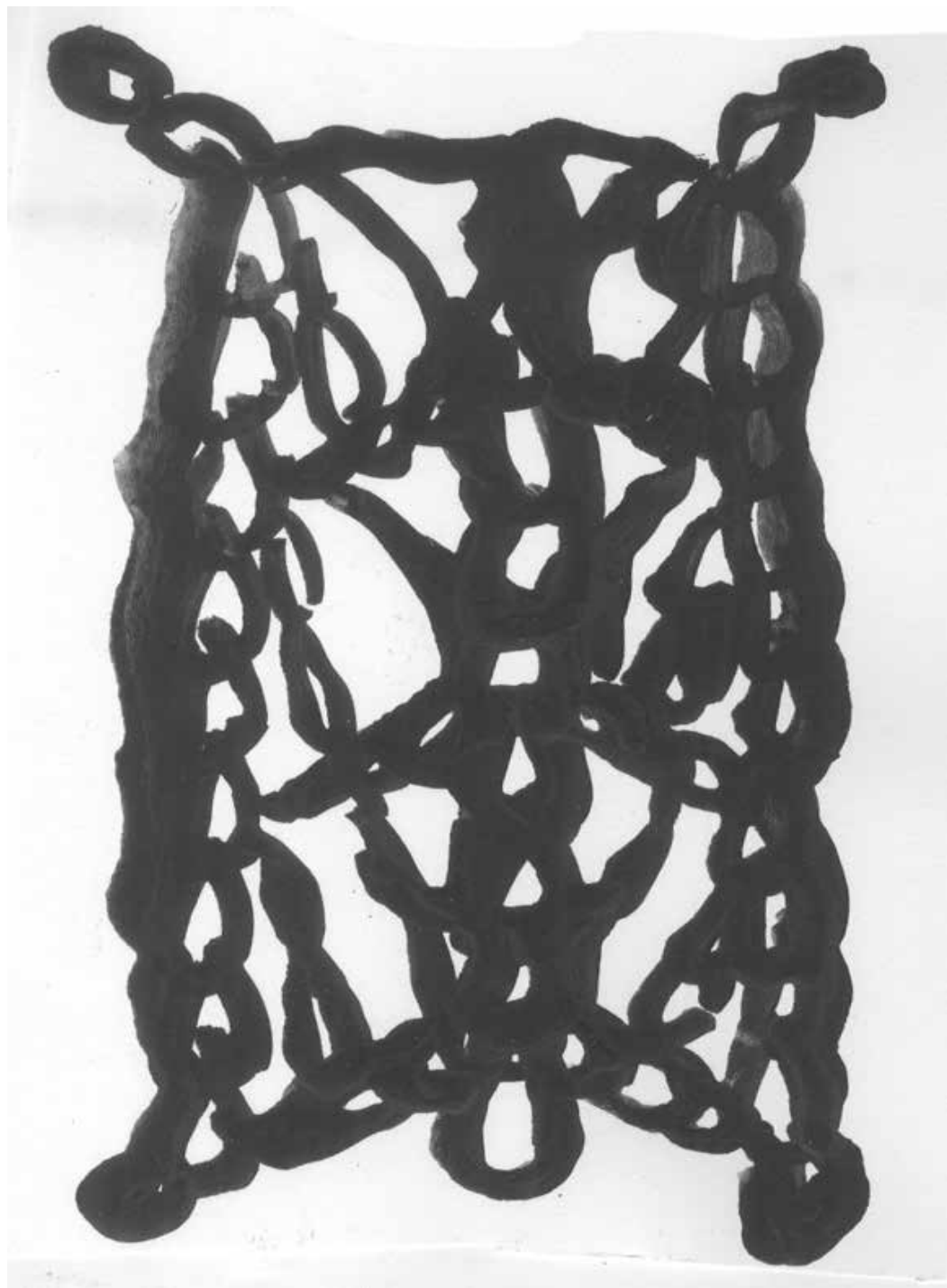
If you need a front-end coder or a link to Sophie's piece in The Outline

go to [www.sophiehelf.com](http://www.sophiehelf.com)

Also listen to the Death Panel Podcast,  
 on which Sophie is a regular,

and  
read her shoe review column for Garage.

25





it's not my father's house, its mine.

I shouldn't need to invoke paternal authority like that. It is diminishing of oneself.

Welcome to my home. Oiled woodwork gulps its way up and around you, soft knots of dead velvet hang ruggedly everywhere. The carpet is soaked. In places the floor has begun to give way and it leaves little pools.

The water table is a few inches above the boards.

"my brother paul is coming" I mutter to myself as I childishly kick through the sheet of liquid full of wood pulp, loose threads, and microbes. It stinks here. I think about the flooded basements below and the weakened supports between, the house now a boat held above the sea only by the rocks it collided with.

it looks fine from without, but...

A cliché I know, and the house is not the subconscious, as I said, this is not my father's house, it is mine.

I stop kicking and walk more carefully, watching for where the carpet bulges threateningly, mindful that my feet might pass through. I pick up a shattered curtain rod and use it ahead of me as I work my way down the hall, poking at the floor with suspicion. I use one hand while



the other holds the tapestry I wear like a robe, keeping it closed at my chest.

My clothes are drying on the roof, victim of an earlier fall when I slipped on rotten book of historical isometric exercises. Flex and balance. Bang i hit the soaked floor, my fall dislodging the glass eye from a stuffed rhino head, barely holding its form in a fireplace where I had been stuff to block a torrent of rain. As shocked as me, the eyeball stared straight up. My back soaked, I was forced to disrobe and find something to wear, an afghan war rug the only viable option.

I catch sight of myself in the reflection of the floor, still now I had unthinkingly stopped as I recalled my fall. I look like the girl Alia from the film. "My brother paul is coming".



XX

There are a lot of different words to talk around the mistake made by someone else when they took a guess at whether you were boy or a girl when you first arrived and all of those words are ugly to degrees and most of the most ugly ones are in medical textbooks but none as ugly as the results of that guess which to be honest could have been avoided if that someone else had \*just not\*.

UB - 2019

It's really difficult to become invisible, not least because you learn through mistakes as with most things.

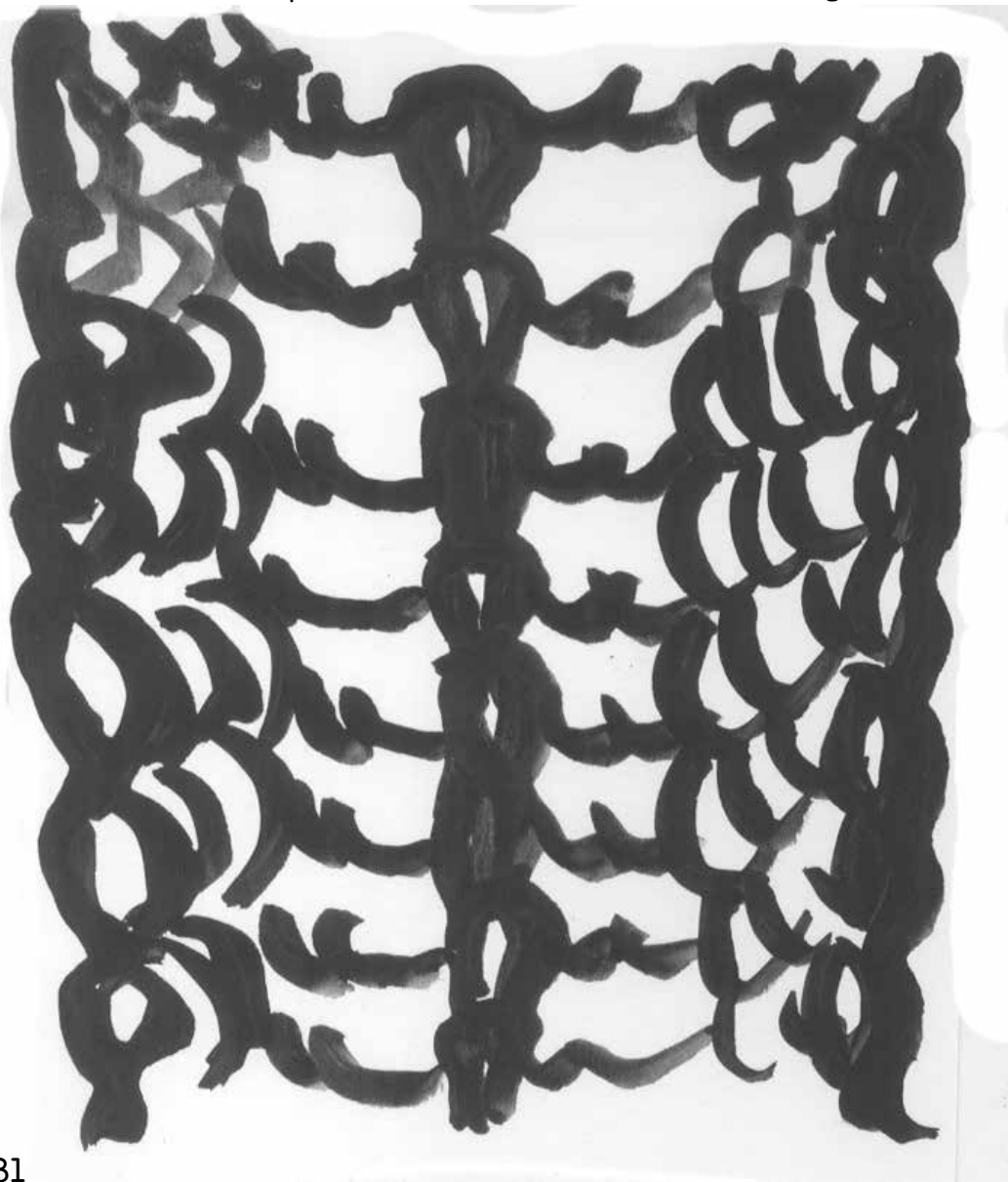
It's definitely easier for become invisible with a well rolled initial character. Some are already pretty close. Some are miles away. None of this has any bearing on the \*desire to become invisible\* which is completely separate from the capacity to do so. But this isn't to lament luck, which is often a mispronunciation of "the socio-political historical context".

It is however, seductive to lament, and the context I find myself in, the one in into which I was born, lends itself readily to lamentation. The mudflats are a grey which contains all of the other colours under a sky of the same only darker. I rub myself in the mud again unconsciously, both a nervous habit and a necessity to keep my skin wet enough to breathe through. I flip myself back upright to look out at the Yellow Sea on the horizon, I can't tell if it's going in or out. Gulls are screaming overhead and one flaps down hard near me, one foot hitting the surface and the other grabs the upstretch arm of a large crab who had been pointing toward the sun as it emerges from



behind a cloud and lets out an audible “whoops!” as it hoisted into the air. Fuck.

I flip again so I can keep breathing, open my eyes which I had closed involuntarily at the rushing approach of the gull. I can see in all directions and it's all the same bar the white line of The Yellow Sea in one direction and the occasional thin beam of sunlight cut through breaks in cloud with passes of the wet surface with no regard.



Horse Bites Fence

2019

Printed by Footprint Workers Co-operative, Leeds, UK

on Cairn Eco Kraft

with all text in Lexie Readable

and funded by Arts Council England.

Elena, Rebecca, and Uma.

[Horsebitesfence.tumblr.com](https://horsebitesfence.tumblr.com)





A zine about art, disability, sickness,  
and diva solidarity.

Rebecca Bligh

Uma Breakdown

Elena Colman

with

Sophie Helf

and

Hestia Peppe

2019

This publication is available as a free pdf

(along with further material)

at

[Horsebitesfence.tumblr.com](https://horsebitesfence.tumblr.com)



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**